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# CANCER FACTS

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National Cancer Institute • National Institutes of Health

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## Questions and Answers About PDQ®

### 1. What is PDQ?

PDQ is a comprehensive, computerized cancer information database that is updated monthly. PDQ contains the latest information available about cancer treatment, prevention, screening, and supportive care; listings of research studies (clinical trials); and directories of physicians and organizations involved in cancer care. PDQ is maintained by the National Cancer Institute (NCI) with the help of cancer experts from across the Nation.

### 2. What information is included in PDQ?

PDQ contains the following information:

- **Treatment Summaries for Patients and Health Professionals:** peer-reviewed, detailed staging and treatment information for more than 80 different types of cancer.
- **Screening and Prevention Summaries for Patients and Health Professionals:** peer-reviewed summaries of the latest information about cancer screening and prevention for major cancer sites.
- **Supportive Care Summaries for Patients and Health Professionals:** peer-reviewed information on the assessment and management of problems and conditions commonly associated with cancer and its treatment.
- **Clinical Trial Protocols:** ongoing and closed clinical trials (research studies) from around the world. Protocol abstracts are available in health professional and patient formats.
- **Directories of Health Care Professionals and Organizations:** more than 22,000 physicians and over 8,000 organizations active in cancer care.

### 3. What information is in the cancer information summaries?

- **Treatment Summaries:** PDQ treatment summaries contain a description of prognosis (probable outcome), cellular classification (tissue type), staging (extent of disease), and treatments for all major cancers and some cancer-related conditions.

The treatment summaries describe therapies currently available for a specific type and stage (extent) of cancer. PDQ does not recommend one treatment over another, but lists treatment options that the doctor may consider in developing a treatment plan to meet a patient's needs. Because advances in treatment occur frequently, PDQ summaries are reviewed monthly by PDQ Editorial Board oncology experts and are updated as needed.

- **Screening and Prevention Summaries:** PDQ screening and prevention summaries contain information that describes the significance and evidence of benefits of screening in common types of cancer, and information on cancer prevention for particular types of cancer.
- **Supportive Care Summaries:** PDQ supportive care summaries contain information about health problems caused by cancer or its treatment or a combination of the two. The supportive care summaries cover such subjects as pain, nausea, and vomiting.

### 4. What are clinical trials?

Clinical trials are research studies in which people participate. There are many types of clinical trials. They include studies to evaluate prevention, detection, and treatment of cancer, as well as studies designed to lessen the distress of the disease and improve comfort and quality of life. Each trial is designed to answer scientific questions. People who take part in clinical trials have the first opportunity to benefit from new research and make a very important contribution to medical science.

### 5. What are high priority clinical trials?

The NCI designates certain clinical trials as "high priority" in order to encourage participation in these studies. High priority trials study treatment methods that have the potential to increase survival for common cancers and/or that are expected to answer important biological questions.

### 6. What information about clinical trials is in PDQ?

PDQ provides summaries of ongoing treatment, supportive care, and screening and prevention clinical trials, including all NCI-funded clinical trials and some studies conducted by independent investigators at hospitals and medical centers in the United

States and Europe. Most of the trials in PDQ are designed to evaluate new treatments for cancer patients.

**7. What information is in the Physician Directory?**

PDQ's Physician Directory lists contact information about physicians who are members of professional societies. The Directory also includes investigators whose protocols are included in PDQ, members of NCI clinical cooperative groups, and NCI Community Clinical Oncology Programs and their participating physicians. The directory does not necessarily list all cancer specialists located in a particular area, and it does not constitute an endorsement of professional competence.

**8. What information is in the Directory of Organizations?**

PDQ's Directory of Organizations contains information about organizations with cancer care programs. These organizations include NCI Comprehensive and Clinical Cancer Centers, NCI Community Clinical Oncology Programs, clinical trials groups, member institutions of the Association of Community Cancer Centers and the Association of American Cancer Institutes, and American College of Surgeons-approved cancer care programs. The directory does not necessarily list all organizations involved in cancer care, and it does not constitute NCI's endorsement of included organizations.

**9. What are the ways of obtaining information from PDQ?**

Listed below are several ways to access information from PDQ.

- **Cancer Information Service:** Cancer patients, their families, and the public can obtain PDQ information by calling NCI's Cancer Information Service (CIS) at 1-800-4-CANCER. Information specialists at the CIS use PDQ cancer prevention, screening, and treatment summaries; clinical trials information; and other NCI resources to answer callers' questions about cancer. They can also send PDQ information and NCI materials to callers. Information from the PDQ directories of physicians and organizations is not available through the CIS.
- **CancerNet™:** CancerNet, one of NCI's Web sites, contains PDQ cancer information summaries about treatment, screening and prevention, and supportive care; PDQ clinical trials information; CANCERLIT®, NCI's bibliographic information; and other related information. CancerNet does not contain information from the PDQ directories. CancerNet may be accessed at <http://cancernet.nci.nih.gov> on the Internet.
- **cancerTrials™:** The cancerTrials site is NCI's comprehensive clinical trials information center for patients, health professionals, and the public. It includes information on understanding trials, deciding whether to participate in trials, and finding specific trials listed in PDQ, plus research news and other resources. The

cancerTrials Web site may be accessed at <http://cancertrials.nci.nih.gov> on the Internet.

- **CancerFax®:** CancerFax is a way to obtain PDQ information summaries (in English or Spanish) using a fax machine. It also contains NCI fact sheets on various cancer topics, as well as other NCI information. CancerFax does not contain listings of clinical trials or information from the PDQ directories. CancerFax can be used 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Users must pay for the cost of the telephone call from their fax machine to the CancerFax computer in Bethesda, Maryland. Cost will depend on the length of the transmission and the long distance rates for the user's phone and fax lines; the telephone number for CancerFax is 301-402-5874. For a fact sheet that explains how to use CancerFax, call the CIS at 1-800-4-CANCER.
- **CancerMail™:** CancerMail provides PDQ cancer information summaries and other related information via e-mail. To obtain a contents list, send e-mail to [cancermail@icicc.nci.nih.gov](mailto:cancermail@icicc.nci.nih.gov) with the word "help" in the body.
- **PDQ/CANCERLIT® Service Center:** Physicians and other health professionals can obtain PDQ materials from the PDQ/CANCERLIT Service Center, which provides customized searches. The telephone number for the Service Center is 1-800-345-3300. The fax number is 1-800-380-1575 (301-897-9563 outside the United States), and the e-mail address is [pdqsearch@icic.nci.nih.gov](mailto:pdqsearch@icic.nci.nih.gov). The mailing address is PDQ/CANCERLIT Service Center, National Cancer Institute, 9030 Old Georgetown Road, Bethesda, MD 20814.

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### **Sources of National Cancer Institute Information**

#### **Cancer Information Service**

Toll-free: 1-800-4-CANCER (1-800-422-6237)

TTY (for deaf and hard of hearing callers): 1-800-332-8615

#### **NCI Online**

##### ***Internet***

Use <http://www.cancer.gov> to reach NCI's Web site.

##### ***CancerMail Service***

To obtain a contents list, send e-mail to [cancermail@icicc.nci.nih.gov](mailto:cancermail@icicc.nci.nih.gov) with the word "help" in the body of the message.

**CancerFax®** fax on demand service

Dial 301-402-5874 and listen to recorded instructions.

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